

IN THE CLAIMS:

**Claim 1 (Currently Amended):** A method executed within a processing unit for filtering packets, comprising the steps of:

    receiving a packet that includes an encrypted identifier and an unencrypted remainder of said packet, for verifying identity of a first device that sent said packet;

    authenticating said identifier;

    determining whether to forward said packet to a second device based on result of said authenticating, and a policy relative to said source device; and

    forwarding said packet to said second device in accordance with said determination.

**Claim 2 (Previously Presented):** The method of claim 1, wherein said step of determining comprises:

    comparing authenticated identifier yielded by said step of authenticating to a list of identifiers;

    retrieving at least one policy rule relative to said authenticated identifier;

    determining whether to send said packet to said second device in accordance with said policy rule.

**Claim 3 (Canceled).**

**Claim 4 (Original):** The method of claim 1, wherein said authenticating is performed in accordance with IPSEC standards.

**Claim 5 (Original):** The method of claim 1, wherein said authenticating comprises:

    retrieving a pointer to a security association from an authentication header from said packet;

    retrieving a key associated with said security association; and

    determining whether said packet is authentic using said key.

**Claim 6 (Previously Presented):** The method of claim 5, further comprising the step of sending a first message to a third device indicating said identifier is not authentic when said step of authenticating so determines.

**Claim 7 (Original):** The method of claim 5 wherein said authentication header is an IPSEC authentication header.

**Claim 8 (Previously Presented):** The method of claim 1, wherein said packet is, in addition, encrypted, and said method further comprises decrypting said packet prior to authenticating.

**Claim 9 (Original):** The method of claim 8, wherein said packet is encrypted and decrypted using one of group of cryptographic techniques comprising DES, triple DES, HMAC and RSA.

**Claim 10 (Previously Presented):** The method of claim 1, wherein said policy rule is stored in a policy configuration file at said processing unit.

**Claim 11 (Previously Presented):** A machine-readable memory whose contents cause a computer system to perform packet filtering, by performing the steps of:  
receiving a packet that includes an encrypted identifier for verifying identity of a first device that sent said packet, while remainder of said packet unencrypted;  
authenticating said identifier;  
determining whether to forward said packet to a second device based on result of said authenticating, and a policy relative to said source device; and  
forwarding said packet to said second device in accordance with said determination.

**Claim 12 (Previously Presented):** The machine-readable memory of claim 11, wherein said determining comprises:

comparing authenticated identifier yielded by said step of authenticating to a list of identifiers;

retrieving at least one policy rule relative to said authenticated identifier;

determining whether to send said packet to said second device in accordance with said comparison and said policy rule.

**Claim 13 (Canceled).**

**Claim 14 (Original):** The machine-readable memory of claim 11, wherein said authenticating is performed in accordance with IPSEC standards.

**Claim 15 (Original):** The machine-readable memory of claim 11, wherein said authenticating comprises:

retrieving a pointer to a security association from an authentication header from said packet;

retrieving a key associated with said security association; and determining whether said packet is authentic using said key.

**Claim 16 (Previously Presented):** The machine-readable memory of claim 15, further comprising the step of sending a first message to a third device indicating said identifier is not authentic when said step of authenticating so determines.

**Claim 17 (Original):** The machine-readable memory of claim 15 wherein said authentication header is an IPSEC authentication header.

**Claim 18 (Previously Presented):** The machine-readable memory of claim 11, wherein said packet is, in addition, encrypted, and said method further comprises decrypting said packet prior to authenticating.

**Claim 19 (Original):** The machine-readable memory of claim 18, wherein said packet is encrypted and decrypted using one of group of cryptographic techniques comprising DES, triple DES, HMAC and RSA.

**Claim 20 (Previously Presented):** The machine-readable memory of claim 11, wherein said policy rule is stored in a policy configuration file at said processing unit.

**Claim 21 (Previously Presented):** A packet filter for a distributed firewall, comprising:

- an input means coupled to said first network for receiving a data packet from a first device, said data packet having an encrypted common host identifier for verifying identity of a first device that sent said packet via a decryption process, while remainder of said packet unencrypted;
- a first buffer coupled to said input means for storing said received packet;
- a first memory segment containing a list of common host identifiers and at least one policy rule;
- a second memory segment for storing a program for decrypting said common host identifier, authenticating said common host identifier, and determining whether to send said packet to a second device based on said list and said policy rule;
- a processor coupled to said first buffer, said first memory segment and said second memory segment for executing said program; and
- an output means coupled to said first buffer for forwarding said compared data packet to said second device based on said comparison.

**Claim 22 (Previously Presented):** The apparatus of claim 21, further comprising a second buffer for storing said compared data packet prior to forwarding said compared data packet to the second device.

**Claims 23 (Canceled).**

**Claims 24 (Canceled).**

**Claims 25 (Canceled).**

**Claims 26 (Canceled).**

**Claims 27 (Canceled).**

**Claims 28 (Canceled).**

**Claim 29 (Previously Presented):** A distributed firewall system, comprising:

- a first network device;
- a second network device in communication with said first network device;
- a packet filter processor for each network device;
- an encryption means coupled to said packet filter processor, said encryption means for authenticating source of a packet sent from said first network device to second network device by decrypting an encrypted portion of said packet; and
- a system management module to manage said packet filter processors.

**Claim 30 (Previously Presented):** The system of claim 29 wherein said authenticating comprises:

- retrieving a pointer to a security association from an authentication header from said packet;
- retrieving a key associated with said security association; and
- determining whether said packet is authentic using said key.

**Claim 31 (Previously Presented):** The system of claim 30 wherein said authentication header is an IPSEC authentication header.

**Claim 32 (New)** The method of claim 1 where said identifier relates to hardware.

**Claim 33 (New)** The method of claim 1 where said identifier relates to an IP source address.

**Claim 34 (New)** The method of claim 1 where said receiving a packet is unsolicited.